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Harry S. Truman, Diary, July 25, 1945

President Truman told his diary on July 25, 1945, that he had ordered the bomb used.

Emphasis has been added to highlight Truman's apparent belief that he had ordered the bomb dropped on a "purely military" target, so that "military objectives and soldiers and sailors are the target and not women and children."

We have discovered the most terrible bomb in the history of the world. It may be the fire destruction prophesied in the Euphrates Valley Era, after Noah and his fabulous Ark.

Anyway we "think" we have found the way to cause a disintegration of the atom. An experiment in the New Mexico desert was startling - to put it mildly. Thirteen pounds of the explosive caused the complete disintegration of a steel tower 60 feet high, created a crater 6 feet deep and 1,200 feet in diameter, knocked over a steel tower 1/2 mile away and knocked men down 10,000 yards away. The explosion was visible for more than 200 miles and audible for 40 miles and more.

This weapon is to be used against Japan between now and August 10th. **I have told the Sec. of War, Mr. Stimson, to use it so that military objectives and soldiers and sailors are the target and not women and children.** Even if the Japs are savages, ruthless, merciless and fanatic, we as the leader of the world for the common welfare cannot drop that terrible bomb on the old capital or the new.

He and I are in accord. The **target will be a purely military one** and we will issue a warning statement asking the Japs to surrender and save lives. I'm sure they will not do that, but we will have given them the chance. It is certainly a good thing for the world that Hitler's crowd or Stalin's did not discover this atomic bomb. It seems to be the most terrible thing ever discovered, but it can be made the most useful...

Truman quoted in Robert H. Ferrell, *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980) pp. 55-56. Truman's writings are in the public domain.

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URL: <http://www.dannen.com/decision/hst-jl25.html>

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Official Bombing Order, July 25, 1945

Source: U.S. National Archives, Record Group 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, Manhattan Engineer District, TS Manhattan Project File '42 to '46, Folder 5B "(Directives, Memos, Etc. to and from C/S, S/W, etc.)."

The written order for the use of the atomic bomb against Japanese cities was drafted by General Groves. President Truman and Secretary of War Stimson approved the order at Potsdam.

The order made no mention of targetting military objectives or sparing civilians. The cities themselves were the targets. The order was also open-ended. "Additional bombs" could be dropped "as soon as made ready by the project staff."

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E.O. 11652, Secs 3(E) and 5(D) or (E)

NND 730039

By ERC NARS, Date 6-4-74

25 July 1945

TO: General Carl Spaatz
Commanding General
United States Army Strategic Air Forces

1. The 509 Composite Group, 20th Air Force will deliver its first special bomb as soon as weather will permit visual bombing after about 3 August 1945 on one of the targets: Hiroshima, Kokura, Niigata and Nagasaki. To carry military and civilian scientific personnel from the War Department to observe and record the effects of the explosion of the bomb, additional aircraft will accompany the airplane carrying the bomb. The observing planes will stay several miles distant from the point of impact of the bomb.

2. Additional bombs will be delivered on the above targets as soon as made ready by the project staff. Further instructions will be issued concerning targets other than those listed above.

3. Discussion of any and all information concerning the use of the weapon against Japan is reserved to the Secretary of War and the President of the United States. No communiques on the subject or releases of information will be issued by Commanders in the field without specific prior authority. Any news stories will be sent to the War Department for specific clearance.

4. The foregoing directive is issued to you by direction and with the approval of the Secretary of War and of the Chief of Staff, USA. It is desired that you personally deliver one copy of this directive to General MacArthur and one copy to Admiral Nimitz for their information.

(Sgd) THOS. T. HANDY

THOS. T. HANDY
General, G.S.C.
Acting Chief of Staff

copy for General Groves

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Truman Speech, August 9, 1945 (excerpt)

In a radio speech to the nation on August 9, 1945, President Truman called Hiroshima "a military base." It seems likely, considering his July 25 diary entry, that he was not aware that Hiroshima was a city. Otherwise, he was being untruthful about the nature of the target.

Truman delivered his speech from the White House at 10 P.M. Washington time on August 9, 1945. By this time, a second atomic bomb already had destroyed the city of Nagasaki. Because of the great length of the speech, most of which dealt with Germany, only the relevant paragraph is quoted here.

The world will note that the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a military base. That was because we wished in this first attack to avoid, insofar as possible, the killing of civilians. But that attack is only a warning of things to come. If Japan does not surrender, bombs will have to be dropped on her war industries and, unfortunately, thousands of civilian lives will be lost. I urge Japanese civilians to leave industrial cities immediately, and save themselves from destruction.

Source: Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches and Statements of the President April 12 to December 31, 1945 (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1961) page 212. The full text also was published in the New York Times, August 10, 1945, page 12.

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